

## **IN MEMORY OF SEPTEMBER 11 TERRORIST ATTACKS**

**Patricia A. Butenis  
U.S. Ambassador**

The anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks is an appropriate occasion for the international community to reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of all acts of terror. No faith condones the deliberate targeting and killing of innocent civilians, and no cause or grievance - no matter how legitimate - can ever justify it.

The victims of September 11th were citizens of more than 90 different countries – including Bangladesh - and adherents of many faiths - including Islam. Since Osama Bin Laden declared war on America ten years ago, thousands of people of many nations, religions, races and beliefs have been murdered as a result of his instigation or incitement of acts of terror.

Terrorist attacks against the United States and our friends and allies began long before we acted to remove the Taliban regime, which was harboring al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda's agenda is to impose a Taliban-like tyrannical regime on the many proud and sovereign nations of the Islamic world, and they have nothing but intolerance for all those who do not share their extremist beliefs - including fellow Muslims. We saw the type of society they seek in the Taliban rule of Afghanistan, when little girls were not allowed to go to school, women were not allowed to work, music was banned, and cultural and historical icons were destroyed. Whether or not they had direct ties to al Qaeda, this is also the type of society that violent extremists sought for Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh rejected the extremists' terrorism and their conception of society; they chose freedom over tyranny and tolerance over intolerance.

Al-Qaeda claims to act on behalf of Islam and threatens those who will not convert, but all major religions, including Islam, Christianity and Judaism, share a commitment to social justice, compassion, concern for the poor, and love of family and community. All these faiths teach that life is precious, and that taking innocent life, including your own, is wrong. Al-Qaeda does not speak on behalf of Islam and our fight against terrorism is not a war against Islam. This is a struggle that unites the people of the United States, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, and India among others against those who preach a perverted religiosity as cover to attempt to justify murder, terror, and violence.

Despite al-Qaeda's repeated attempts to characterize the world as being in the midst of a clash of civilizations, the simple fact is that the international community comes together to confront common threats and ease human suffering. America is doing its part, working in partnership with countries throughout the Islamic world, to improve the lives of Muslims. America is the largest bilateral donor of aid to the Palestinian people. Americans were the largest providers of help to Muslims affected by the tsunami in Indonesia and the earthquake in Pakistan. Here in Bangladesh we provide funds for Muslim girls and boys to go to school, for Muslim women to visit health clinics, and for Muslim young people to get training for jobs – not because they are Muslim, but because of our shared humanity.

As we look back on September 11, 2001, we also look forward. We seek to work in a spirit of partnership with people and nations across the world to confront this ideology of hate and foster a climate of hope and opportunity. We are far from perfect, yet we believe the ideals of freedom and justice that guide us are universal.

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*Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available from the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center*

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